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SUBJECT: PSUV STALWARTS RETAIN CONTROL IN SEVEN STATES

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ,  
FOR REASON 1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The incoming United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) governors of Cojedes, Delta Amacuro, Falcon, Monagas and Sucre States face significant challenges in meeting the needs of their relatively poor, sparsely-populated regions. The new PSUV governor of Merida will have to balance his support in the heavily Chavista outlying regions against the new opposition mayor in the capital. Lara State remains firmly in PSUV hands, but voted against Chavez's proposed constitutional referendum in December 2007. The governors were most likely selected to run for their personal loyalty to Chavez rather than their technical or administrative skill, although all have at least some experience working in the public sector. This cable is the fourth and final in a series examining the background of the new governors elected in the November 23 state and local elections. End Summary.

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COJEDES - TEODORO BOLIVAR  
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¶2. (C) Teodoro Bolivar began his career as a university professor at the technical school La Salle Foundation of Natural Sciences. He earned an undergraduate degree in economics with a specialization in project management and a masters degree in education administration (1994), both from the University of Carabobo. He also received a specialization in education from the University of Santa Maria in 1999. Despite earning just 17 percent of the vote in the PSUV primary, Bolivar was chosen as the party's gubernatorial candidate -- presumably as a direct order from Chavez -- because first-place winner Jose Gonzalo Muijica Herera "did not fit the profile of a revolutionary." He was elected with 51.53 percent of the vote. Bolivar follows the blatant mismanagement of former governor (2004-2008) Johnny Janez Rangel. Prior to being elected governor, he served as the mayor of the municipality of Tinaco in Cojedes State (2004-2008). Bolivar is married and has two children. He was born in 1960.

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DELTA AMACURO - LIZETA HERNANDEZ  
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¶3. (SBU) Lizeta Hernandez studied medicine at the Univeristy of the Andes and worked as a surgeon in her hometown of Tucupita, the capital of Delta Amacuro State. Although Hernandez is a relative newcomer to the political scene, she has administrative experience in the public sector. In 2005, Hernandez was appointed Director of Health as well as Health

and Social Development Rector for Venezuela's least populated state. Her father, Simplicio Hernandez, was governor of Delta Amacuro from 1979 to 1981. Hernandez, who is of Lebanese descent, was born in 1967. She is married and has children. Hernandez was elected with 59.54 percent of the vote.

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FALCON - STELLA LUGO  
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¶4. (C) Stella Lugo, the wife of former governor Jesus Montilla (2000-2008), probably received her gubernatorial nomination because of her husband's revolutionary credentials and longstanding loyalty to Chavez. Jesus was ineligible to run for a third term. Stella is a certified public accountant by training and has played a key role in establishing various social programs in Falcon, including a neonatal services center, the "Josefa Camejo" soup kitchen, a shelter and hotline for abused women, and a youth drug rehabilitation clinic. Lugo has been conferred a number of awards in recognition of her commitment to improve socio-economic conditions for vulnerable residents of Falcon State. Lugo's father, Pacomio Lugo, was a decorated military officer who fought against Romulo Betancourt's government in the 1960s. She won with 55.27 percent of the vote.

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LARA - HENRI FALCON  
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¶5. (SBU) Henri Falcon won 73.15 percent of the vote to become governor of Lara, more than any other gubernatorial candidate in the November 23 elections. Widely known as a skilled administrator, Lara maintains a favorable reputation across

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party lines. As a moderate Chavista, Lara was briefly expelled from the PSUV, but quickly reaccepted into the party and granted full endorsement. Prior to assuming the governorship, Falcon served as Mayor of Barquisimeto. While in office, he stimulated the local economy by approving the construction of a large-scale shopping mall and was widely perceived as a business-friendly pragmatist. Falcon is married and has one small child.

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MERIDA - MARCOS DIAZ ORELLANA  
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¶6. (SBU) Marcos Diaz Orellana completed studies at the Military Academy of Venezuela as well as the University of the Andes. After earning a medical degree, he enlisted in the Venezuelan army. He subsequently pursued master's degrees in management and planning and advanced language studies in English and Italian. Prior to becoming governor, Orellana served as director of the Army Health Unit (UEPS), director of the Merida Corporation of Health and director of Social Development. In 2008, Orellana retired as a major from the military and was selected by the PSUV to run for governor of Merida. Orellana was born in 1960. He is married and has a son. Orellana narrowly defeated former governor William Davila by winning 54.62 percent of the vote.

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MONAGAS - JOSE GREGORIO BRICENO  
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¶7. (SBU) Jose Gregorio Briceno began his political career in 1979 as a youth leader with Accion Democratica (AD). In the early 1990s, he was expelled from AD and founded the local Cedeno Independent Movement party. In the municipal elections in 1992, Briceno defeated his former AD contemporaries to become the mayor of the Cedeno municipality. At the age of 26, Briceno was recognized as one of the youngest mayors in Latin America. He was

re-elected in 1995 with the third-highest percentage of the vote among all mayoral candidates nationwide. In 1996, Briceno founded another regional party, the We All Win Independent Movement (MIGATO), and earned the moniker of "El Gato," the cat. He ran unsuccessfully for governor of Monagas in 1996 and 2000. Briceno's third gubernatorial bid proved successful in 2004. Earning 65 percent of the vote, he obtained the second highest percentage of votes among all gubernatorial candidates. He is widely perceived as a pragmatist within the PSUV. Briceno was born in 1965.

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SUCRE - ENRIQUE MAESTRE  
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18. (SBU) Enrique Maestre was the former mayor (2004-08) of Sucre borough in Sucre State. He earned a Sociology degree from the University of the East in Monagas. Maestre has served as president of the Student's Association of Jose Tadeo Monagas High School, secretary general of the Integrated Unit of Social Programs for the Regional Government of Sucre State and deputy to the state's Regional Legislative Council. Maestre won 56.08 percent of the vote.

19. (C) Comment: Of the seven aforementioned governors, only Enrique Maestre in Sucre State replaces a non-PSUV candidate. Former Sucre governor Ramon Martinez of the Podemos party, who served from 2004 to 2008, made headlines for withdrawing his support for Chavez and threatening that there would be "civil war" due to his policymaking. The failure of any pro-government dissident candidate to win a gubernatorial slot in November has reaffirmed Chavez and his PSUV as the only "revolutionary" game in town -- and demonstrated the high political price for internal dissenters. End Comment.  
CAULFIELD